

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9380
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3192

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV ELAB BG
SUBJECT: BDG TO REVIEW JOURNALISTS' DEMANDS; NEW PAY SCALES FOR
STRIKING BANK EMPLOYEES; DACCA UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS DO
NOT RESIGN

REFS: A. DACCA 3119; B. DACCA 2922; C. DACCA 2885

1. THE BDG HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL TRI-
BUNAL BY JUNE 15 TO ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION BY ALL THE NEWSPAPERS
OF THE EARLIER WAGE BOARD SALARY RECOMMENDATIONS. UNI-
VERSAL WAGE SCALE IMPLEMENTATION HAD BEEN ONE OF THE
PRINCIPAL DEMANDS OF THE BANGLADESH JOURNALISTS IN THEIR
RECENT PROTESTS (REF A). THE GOVERNMENT ALSO ANNOUNCED
THAT "AN EXTRA-LEGAL BODY" WOULD BE SET UP WITH REPRESENTA-
TIVES OF THE NEWSPAPERS, JOURNALISTS AND GOVERNMENT TO
EXAMINE AND REMOVE "CERTAIN GENUINE GRIEVANCES" OF THE
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JOURNALISTS. THE LATTER COMMITTEE MUST SUBMIT ITS REPORT
BY JUNE 15, ACCORDING TO BSS, THE GOVERNMENT NEWS
AGENCY. BSS ALSO REPORTED MAY 19 THAT THE ADVISOR FOR
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, SHAMSUL HUDA CHOUDHURY,
"REGRETTED THE UNHAPPY INCIDENT OF MAY 16." HE ANNOUNCED
THAT AN INQUIRY WAS IN PROGRESS.

2. ALSO ON MAY 19, THE BDG ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A PAY COMMITTEE TO WORK OUT A NEW PAY STRUCTURE EMPHASIZING FRINGE BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONALIZED BANKS. THE BANK EMPLOYEES HAD BEEN HOLDING PEN DOWN STRIKES SINCE THE NINTH OF MAY (REF B). THE GOVERNMENT PRESS NOTE STERNLY STATED THAT IN THE LARGE INTEREST OF THE NATION "THE EMPLOYEES WILL CALL OFF THEIR ACTION PROGRAM AND DESIST FROM ANY ACTION THAT MAY DISRUPT THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF THESE INSTITITUIONS." THE BDG ALSO ANNOUNCED AN "AD HOC" FINANCIAL BENEFIT FOR HOUSING RENT, BUT THE DETAILS WERE NOT DISCLOSED. DESPITE THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS, THE BANK EMPLOYEES HAVE CONTINUED THEIR WORK STOPPAGE AND REPORTEDLY HAVE REJECTED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS.

3. ONE PAY DISPUTE NOT PUBLICLY ADDRESSED BY THE GOVERNMENT INVOLVES THE STRIKING INSTRUCTORS FROM DACCA AND JAHANGIRNAGAR UNIVERSITIES (REF C). THEY HAD THREATENED TO RESIGN AN MASSE MAY 14 IF THEIR WAGE DEMANDS WERE NOT MET.THE DEADLINE PASSED WITH NO PUBLIC GOVERNMENT RESPONSE AND NO RESIGNATIONS. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT AT DACCA UNIVERSITY THE TEACHERS WERE RELUCTANT TO RESIGN FOR FEAR THEY WOULD BE OUT IN THE COLD WITH NO RECOURSE.

4. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO PLACATE THE JOURNALISTS MAY HAVE DEFUSED THEIR DISCONTENT BEFORE IT REACHED THE VIOLENT STAGE. THE PROMPT RESPONSE
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SPEAKS WELL FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN THAT CONFRONTATION. TROUBLE WITH THE BANK EMPLOYEES MAY CONTINUE, HOWEVER, IRRITATIING THE PUBLIC AND CHALLENGING THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY.
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NNN

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